

Gesneriads FAQs

Kingdom: [Plantae](#)

Division: [Magnoliophyta](#)

Class: [Magnoliopsida](#)

Order: [Lamiales](#)

Family: [Gesneriaceae](#)

Genus: *Episcia*, *Kohleria*, *Streptocarpus*, etc

What is a gesneriad?

The gesneriad (pronounced either “guess-NARE-ee-ad” or “jez-NARE-ee-ad”) family contains over 3,200 species of plants. The best-known member of the gesneriad family is the African violet (*Saintpaulia*).

What are some of the other common gesneriads?

In addition to the African violet, some of the more common gesneriads grown by hobbyists are the florist gloxinia (*Sinningia speciosa*), lipstick plant (*Aeschynanthus*), goldfish plant (*Nematanthus*), cape primrose (*Streptocarpus*), flame violet (*Episcia*), and Cupid’s Bower (*Achimenes*).

Was the gesneriad family named after someone?

The family was named for Swiss botanist Konrad Gesner (1516 – 1565).

How are gesneriads classified?

A distinction is made between “Old World” Gesneriads (those from Asia, Africa, Europe and Australia), and those from the “New World,” (South and Central America). The former are said to belong to the sub-family Cyrtandroideae, the latter to the sub-family Gesnerioideae.

Where are most gesneriads found?

Most gesneriads are from tropical and subtropical regions and are often found growing in humus-filled depressions or rock crevices, on humus-covered forest floors or epiphytically on tree branches. Some gesneriads (known as “alpines”) are also found in colder, temperate areas, and can tolerate several degrees of frost. Gesneriads are found on all continents except Antarctica.

Do gesneriads bloom easily?

Many gesneriads bloom throughout the year, an especially welcome sight on a cold winter day.

Where can you grow gesneriads?

This is a plant family of great diversity, and many grow under the same conditions we enjoy. Many of the easiest and most beautiful plants for the home or greenhouse belong to the gesneriad family. Some gesneriads go dormant for a short period of time. These are either tuberous or rhizomatous gesneriads.

Gesneriads FAQs

What is a tuber?

A tuber is a starchy underground storage organ. Some gesneriads have tubers which can get quite large, up to a foot in diameter. Tuberous gesneriads are often grown with the top third of the tuber above the soil line, making for an unusual presentation. Tuberous gesneriads generally have a dormant period and resprout after a short period of time. Tuberous gesneriads are found only in South America and are considered New World gesneriads.

What are some tuberous gesneriads?

The tuberous gesneriads include *Sinningia*, *Nautilocalyx* and *Chrysothemis*.

What is a rhizome?

A rhizome is a modified stem that grows underground and serves as a storage organ. Rhizomes can be smooth or scaly. The scales are modified leaves. Like tuberous gesneriads, those with rhizomes generally have a dormant period and resprout after a short period of time. Those with scaly rhizomes are found only in the New World.

What are some rhizomatous gesneriads?

Gesneriads that produce rhizomes are *Achimenes*, *Smithiantha* and *Kohleria*.

Are there other kinds of gesneriads?

Gesneriads that are neither tuberous nor rhizomatous are considered to be fibrous rooted. Unlike tuberous and rhizomatous gesneriads, fibrous rooted gesneriads never go dormant. However, once the main growth dies the plant is usually lost. Fibrous rooted gesneriads are found all over the world.

What are some fibrous rooted gesneriads?

There are many gesneriads that are considered fibrous rooted. Examples are *Columnea*, *Episcia* and *Saintpaulia* (the African violet).

From gesneriadsociety.org

Please visit their site and peruse their content which, among other things, includes:

Publications: Gleanings – free e-zine for anyone interested in OGs
Gesneriads - Excerpts from their members only magazine

Seed fund listing: mbrs may purchase (cheaply) seeds of unusual crosses of all kinds of OGs..

Find us on the web at jacksonvilleviolets.org

“Like” us on Facebook as **Heart of Jacksonville African Violet Society**